

Compost Task Force  
Final Report

**NOTE: This is a recommendation by a task force of the National Organic Standards Board. This final report provides guidance to producers and certifying agents. As guidance, this report does not constitute a Federal regulation and is subject to change as needed by USDA pending new information and/or comments received from interested parties.**

Producers of any agricultural commodity or product certified as organic under the National Organic Program (NOP) must meet the fundamental requirements for processing and applying plant and animal materials for soil fertility and crop nutrient management practices as described in Section 205.203(c) of the final regulations. This section states:

The producer must manage plant and animal materials to maintain or improve soil organic matter content in a manner that does not contribute to contamination of crops, soil, or water by plant nutrients, pathogenic organisms, heavy metals, or residues of prohibited substances.

Examples of plant and animal materials are described in 205.203 (c) 1-5. This policy statement is being distributed to denote other materials that would be acceptable under 205.203 (c) (2) which applies to plant and animal material mixes. There are no specific regulations for composting when feedstock is made up of only plant material.

1. Compost, in addition to that described in section 205.203 (c) (2), is acceptable if (i) made from only allowed feedstock materials, except for incidental residues that will not lead to contamination, (ii) the compost undergoes an increase in temperature to at least 131° F (55°C) and remains there for a minimum of 3 days, and (iii) the compost pile is mixed or managed to ensure that all of the feedstock heats to the minimum temperature.

The monitoring of the above 3 parameters must be documented in the Organic System Plan (plan) submitted by the producer and verified during the site visit. An explanation of compliance with section 205.203 (c) should also be presented in the plan.

2. Vermicompost is acceptable if (i) made from only allowed feedstock materials, except for incidental residues that will not lead to contamination, (ii) aerobicity is maintained by regular additions of thin layers of organic matter at 1-3 day intervals, (iii) moisture is maintained at 70-90%, and (iv) duration of vermicomposting is at least 12 months for outdoor windrows, 4 months for indoor container systems, 4 months for angled wedge systems, or 60 days for continuous flow reactors.
3. Compost and vermicompost teas are still under review and are, therefore, not eligible to satisfy section 205.203 (c) at this time
4. Processed manure materials must be made from manure that has been heated to a temperature in excess of 150° F (65°C) for one hour or more and dried to a moisture level of 12% or less, or an equivalent heating and drying process that produces a product that is negative for pathogenic contamination by salmonella and fecal coliform material.